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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Executive Committee

#### 120th meeting

Geneva, 26 January 2022

Item 3(b) of the provisional agenda

#### **Matters relating to the Conference of European Statisticians: decisions on matters relating to the Conference of European Statisticians**

### **Decisions relating to the Conference of European Statisticians**

#### *Background*

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its sixty-ninth session on 23–25 June 2021 in Geneva as a hybrid meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report of the session is contained in document ECE/CES/101.
2. In June 2021, the Conference adopted the programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2022, as contained in documents ECE/CES/2021/16 and ECE/CES/2021/16/Add.1.
3. The Conference of European Statisticians endorsed the mandates of the following teams of specialists:
  - (a) Task Force on measuring circular economy (2022–2023);
  - (b) Task Force on data stewardship (2022–2023);
  - (c) Task Force on the role of national statistical offices (NSOs) in achieving national climate objectives (2022–2024).
4. The Task Forces are created by the Conference and its Bureau to accomplish tasks with concrete deliverables and within a definite period of time, after which they cease to exist. The Task Forces work mainly by email and teleconferences, and meet only on the occasion of relevant expert meetings. The creation of the groups has no budget implications for the United Nations Secretariat.
5. The Executive Committee is invited to approve the above decisions.

#### *Draft Decision*

6. The Executive Committee hereby approves the Programme of Work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2022, as contained in documents ECE/CES/2021/16 and ECE/CES/2021/16/Add.1.



7. The Executive Committee hereby approves the terms of references of the following teams of specialists established under the Conference of European Statisticians, as contained in the annexes to the present document:

- (a) Task Force on measuring circular economy (2022–2023), as contained in annex I;
- (b) Task Force on data stewardship (2022–2023), as contained in annex II;
- (c) Task Force on the role of national statistical offices (NSOs) in achieving national climate objectives (2022–2024), as contained in annex III.

## Terms of reference for the Task Force on Measuring Circular Economy

### I. Background

1. In the past two decades, many countries and the European Union have been orienting their waste and materials management policies towards preventive and integrated approaches, with emphasis on the life-cycle and supply chains of materials and products. Policy initiatives aimed at establishing a circular economy (CE) have increased as an essential contribution to the development of a sustainable, low carbon, resource efficient and competitive economy.

2. There is no single or internationally agreed upon definition of a circular economy. But the definitions used by countries, international institutions and NGOs have many common elements. In all definitions the notion of material circularity is key. Definitions also tend to include reduced demand for certain natural resources and the materials and products derived from them.

3. International organizations, such as the European Environment Agency (EEA), Eurostat, FAO, OECD, UNECE, UNEP and UNSD have initiated important methodological work for measuring CE which forms the basis for measuring certain aspects of CE by many countries. Of particular importance are:

(a) The “Bellagio process”: EEA in partnership with the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) are taking forward this initiative which aims at building consensus on ‘what to monitor’ and use best-practice examples as well as innovative ideas to identify shared principles on ‘how to monitor’;

(b) Eurostat’s work related to the “EU Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy”, including methodological development on measuring the circularity rate and improvements of Sankey diagrams;

(c) OECD’s Expert Group on a new Generation of Information on Waste and Materials. This small expert group, in its work program 2020-2021, will encompass the development of a conceptual framework for circular economy metrics for policy making, and the preparation of guidance on information and indicators needed for the transition to a resource-efficient and circular economy;

(d) The United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) is working on a publication highlighting narratives and use cases for the SEEA’s application to policy;

(e) Joint UNECE and FAO work exploring the issue of wood-based value chains in a circular economy;

(f) UNEP methodological work related to economy-wide material flow accounting in the context of sustainable production and consumption.

4. Many countries have started measuring selected aspects of CE (e.g. based on waste statistics and material flow accounts) and are seeking guidance for further developing these statistics based on existing statistical frameworks (such as the Framework for Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and SEEA) in an internationally comparable way.

5. Therefore, the CES Bureau made an in-depth review of “Measuring the circular economy” in February 2020. Finland (lead), Belarus, Canada, Netherlands, EEA, Eurostat and OECD prepared a paper providing the main basis for the review. Colombia, UNECE, UNSD and UNEP also contributed to the paper.

6. The in-depth review gives an overview of international statistical activities in this area, including the work on measuring circular economy by EEA, Eurostat, OECD, UNECE/FAO, UNEP and UNSD. It furthermore presents country practices of Belarus,

Canada, Colombia, Finland and the Netherlands, and identifies the most common measurement challenges.

7. The main recommendations of the in-depth review are to:
  - (a) Draft practical guidelines;
  - (b) Provide platforms for exchange of experience and knowledge;
  - (c) Strengthen coordination and communication of related work of international organisations.
8. The Bureau decided to create a Task Force on Measuring Circular Economy and will review the terms of reference at its February 2021 meeting.

## **II. Mandate**

9. The work of the Task Force on Measuring Circular Economy is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from January 2022 to June 2023, after which it will submit a final report.
10. The activities of the Task Force will be aligned with the related work of the UN Committee on Environment Economic Accounts (UNCEEA) to ensure global relevance. Periodically the Committee will be informed about the progress of the Task Force. Countries from outside the UNECE region that can contribute to the work may be invited to participate in the Task Force.

## **III. Objectives**

11. The main objective of the Task Force is to draft practical guidelines for measuring circular economy, including:
  - (a) Definition of the measurement scope;
  - (b) Clarification of key terms and definitions;
  - (c) Identifying key statistics and indicators needed from the policy point of view;
  - (d) Identifying data sources for measuring circular economy, with particular attention on SEEA and FDES;
  - (e) Describing the required institutional collaboration.
12. Other objectives of the Task Force are to:
  - (a) Contribute to the coordination and collaboration of international organisations' related work; and
  - (b) provide platforms for exchange of experience and knowledge.
13. In pursuing these objectives, the Task Force will cooperate with the UN agencies and other international organizations working in this area, including EEA, Eurostat, OECD, UNEP and UNSD.

## **IV. Planned activities and outputs**

14. The Task Force will undertake the following activities:
  - (a) Discuss and define the measurement scope: There is no internationally agreed definition of the measurement scope for CE. Some economic activities, such as recycling, are widely accepted as being integral aspects of circularity. However, for many activities especially in the services field, this is less clear. Such activities are for instance design, leasing and maintenance. The lack of an agreed definition of the circular economy means that existing statistical sources only provide part of the picture. The Task Force will discuss and define the measurement scope for circular economy, taking into account FDES, SEEA, the

CES Framework on Waste Statistics (presented to the CES Bureau for review in February 2021), the EU Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy, amongst others, together with existing country practices;

(b) Draft practical guidelines for measuring circular economy: The main objective of the guidelines is to support NSOs and other members of the national statistical system in their efforts to measure most important aspects of circular economy in a systematic and internationally comparable way. The work on the guidelines will:

- (i) Take into account the examples, issues and challenges presented in the CES In-depth review of Measuring Circular Economy (ECE/CES/BUR/2020/OCT/2);
- (ii) Prioritise the information requirements of important regional and global policies, such as the EU Green Deal, climate change, innovation, plastic waste, etc.;
- (iii) Clarify the measurement scope, key terms and definitions;
- (iv) Build upon existing guidelines and indicator frameworks, including the CES Framework on Waste Statistics and the EU Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy, amongst others;
- (v) Consider national experiences (e.g. in form of case studies);
- (vi) Explore the use of SEEA, FDES and other data sources for measuring circular economy; and
- (vii) Describe the required institutional collaboration.

(c) Contribute to strengthening coordination and collaboration of international organisations: Early involvement of global and regional key players of measuring CE (including academia) in the work of the Task Force will help to agree on the practical guidelines (activity a), and contribute to the coordination and harmonisation of the CE-related work of these organisations.

(d) Provide platforms for exchange of experience and knowledge: Potential platforms for countries, academia and international organisations to share experience and knowledge on measuring CE include the annual Joint OECD/UNECE Seminars on SEEA Implementation and special expert fora organised under the auspices of UNCEEA. Furthermore, an online repository for sharing of case studies and other practical experience could be established. The Task Force will contribute to the organisation of related expert meetings and explore opportunities for establishing a repository of good practices (e.g. in form of a hub or a wiki on good practices).

15. The main output of the Task Force's work will be Guidelines for measuring circular economy, including:

- (a) Description of the measurement scope and policy context;
- (b) Clarification of key terms and definitions;
- (c) Key statistics and indicators needed from the policy point of view;
- (d) Description of the role of SEEA, FDES and other data sources;
- (e) Description of required institutional collaboration;
- (f) Identification of further areas of work.

## V. Methods of work

16. The Task Force will work primarily via e-mail, collaborative workspace and online conferences. Physical meetings of the Task Force could be organized back-to-back to other meetings attended by a significant number of Task Force members.

## **VI. Membership**

17. The Task Force will include experts on circular economy from national statistical offices, other involved national agencies, academia and international organizations.

18. The following countries, international organizations and research institutes have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Belarus, Canada, Colombia, Finland, India, Netherlands, EEA, Eurostat, IMF, OECD, UNEP, UNSD and United Nations University. Statistics Finland will chair the Task Force. Other countries and international organizations that can contribute to the work may be invited to participate in the Task Force.

19. UNECE will act as Secretariat to the Task Force.

## Terms of reference for the Task Force on data stewardship

### I. Background

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau have discussed data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystems on several occasions, including at CES plenary sessions in 2019 and 2020, and taken into account outcomes of similar discussions at EU, OECD and global level meetings. These discussions have converged towards proposals for practical ways forward to enhance the role of NSOs in the new data ecosystems and in public data governance.
2. The Conference in 2019 noted that a concrete action plan for supporting National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as part of a larger data ecosystem and sharing of good practices are needed, and asked for harmonising the main terms of data governance/stewardship to provide basis for developing common principles and standards. The Conference noted that defining a minimum set of core responsibilities for a data steward would be useful.
3. The CES 2020 session “Data stewardship – NSOs in the changing world” continued the discussion, based on a paper by an informal task team (consisting of Albania, Canada, Estonia (lead), Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and UNECE). The paper (ECE/CES/2020/10) included twenty-one considerations how NSOs can enhance their role in data governance, and a proposed action plan that can serve as a road map for NSOs wishing to increase their role in public data governance.
4. The Conference concluded that the role of NSOs is changing in response to new demands and opportunities. This has been accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis. NSOs can position themselves in the new data ecosystem in different ways, with a range of possibilities from minimal change to full data stewardship. NSOs are at different starting points, some already have cross-government roles, and there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution.
5. The Conference emphasized the need to continue the discussion and sharing ideas and experiences. It concluded with a proposal to set up a Task Force to turn the considerations in the paper from Estonia et al. into a roadmap and action plan to support NSOs. In doing so, it is important to take into account the legal basis, and recognize that NSOs can move forward at their own pace and take on a stewardship role to a different degree. A “maturity model” approach, as used in modernization and capacity development activities, could be useful. A strong link to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics should be maintained to clarify what statistical offices can and cannot do, and avoid undermining trust in official statistics, while considering what can be done and what can be facilitated by NSO in the data steward role.
6. The Bureau discussed data stewardship in October 2020 and decided to create a Task Force to take the work forward. The work should be done in two stages: first, defining the concepts and looking at possible tasks/responsibilities, and in a later stage developing recommendations. It will be good to involve also representatives from the government side in the Task Force.
7. Some work on data stewardship at the global level has been started by the UN Statistical Commission. A stocktaking exercise is carried out under the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB). The group will report to UNSC in March 2021. The Task Force will build on the outcomes of this exercise and take into account the results at the global level to avoid duplication of work.

## **II. Mandate**

8. The work of the Task Force is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from January 2022 to June 2023.

## **III. Objectives**

9. The aim of the Task Force is to clarify the terms related to data stewardship and public data governance, and the tasks of NSOs that this may include in different settings. This could serve as a basis for developing guidance, in a later stage, on the role of NSOs in the new data ecosystem.

## **IV. Planned activities and outputs**

10. The Task Force will focus on the following activities:

(a) Defining ‘data stewardship’ and the related terms (data governance, curation, etc.);

(b) Developing a set of possible responsibilities of a data steward (based on the experience of countries who are undertaking this role, e.g. what kind of data can be covered, what kind of functions/activities/roles undertaken by NSO, etc.) and considerations to be taken into account in shaping the NSO role in this area. This can serve as a basis for identifying a minimum core set of responsibilities and a maturity model of data stewardship;

(c) Developing a toolkit of good practices and tools for implementing the role of data steward;

(d) Clarifying what NSOs can and what they cannot do in this respect, consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

11. On this basis, as a follow-up to the Task Force in a later stage, recommendations and guidance to NSOs could be developed.

## **V. Methods of work**

12. The Task Force will primarily work via e-mail, wiki workspace, and audio or video conferences. When physical meetings will become possible, a face-to-face meeting of the Task Force may be held back-to-back with an international meeting where all the Task Force members participate.

## **VI. Membership**

13. Canada, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, United Kingdom, Eurostat and OECD have expressed willingness to be members of the Task Force. Other countries and organizations may be invited to participate to ensure that the membership reflects different situations and perspectives in countries. Estonia will chair the Task Force.

14. The secretariat will be provided by UNECE.



## **Task Force on the role of national statistical offices in achieving national climate objectives**

### **I. Background**

1. In 2014, the CES Recommendations defined the role of the statistical offices in supporting greenhouse gas inventories and producing other climate change-related statistics, and listed many ways in which NSOs could increase their involvement in providing climate-related data. With the adoption of the Paris Agreement and its Work Programme, these recommendations remain valid, but it is now possible to explore new opportunities and identify concrete ways in which NSOs can contribute to meeting national climate change objectives.

2. First of all, from the perspective of the global reporting, data is integral to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which is a pledge and review system with quantifiable pledges and goals measured through indicators (Enhanced Transparency Framework) and assessment of collective progress every five years (the Global Stocktake). However, countries have a lot of flexibility in setting goals, choosing indicators and organizing reporting arrangements. This means there are many opportunities for NSOs to be involved and add value, though their role is not prescribed in any of the Paris Agreement processes.

3. Secondly, from the national perspective, to meet climate objectives, governments must put in place increasingly ambitious mitigation and adaptation policies and they need reliable data to design these policies and monitor their success.

4. Finally, the Paris Agreement calls for the governments to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps for enhancing global climate action and achieving global climate objectives. Producing timely and relevant climate change-related statistics is key contribution of NSOs towards addressing this call and increasing public awareness of climate related issues.

5. In October 2021, the Bureau discussed and approved the proposal for a Task Force on the role of NSOs in achieving national climate objectives and requested the Steering Group to prepare the terms of reference for its February 2022 meeting.

### **II. Mandate**

6. The work of the Task Force on the Role of National Statistical Offices in Achieving National Climate Objectives is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period of two years, after which it will submit a final report.

### **III. Objectives**

7. The main objective of the Task Force is to develop guidance on the role of national statistical offices in achieving national climate objectives. The guidance will analyse concrete ways in which NSOs can contribute and showcase what the statistical system already offers to support climate action.

### **IV. Planned activities and outputs**

8. The main output of the Task Force's work will be a guidance document on how national statistical offices can contribute to achieving national climate objectives including the following:

(a) Supporting reporting under the Enhanced Transparency Framework of the Paris Agreement and provide input to the Global Stocktake;

(b) Meeting information needs of national climate policymaking, e.g. for planning, measuring and M&E of climate change adaptation, monitoring energy transition, informing just transition, monitoring carbon footprint. The priority areas of national climate policymaking to be covered will be determined by the Task Force;

(c) Informing the broad public about climate-related issues;

(d) Communicating differences between the air emission estimates from SEEA and greenhouse gas inventories.

9. The Task Force will carry out the following activities:

(a) Identify relevant resources that are already available (developed by the Steering Group, the Task Force on the Set of Core Climate Change-Related Statistics and Indicators or other groups and organizations);

(b) Organize workshop(s) or consultations with users of data related to achieving climate objectives, such as policymakers, journalists or researchers;

(c) Identify relevant good practices and country examples;

(d) Draft the Guidance document;

(e) Identify areas for further work.

10. The Task Force will focus on the institutional aspect of NSOs' involvement and guidance on the use of existing data, to complement the ongoing methodological work under major global statistical frameworks and initiatives, e.g. the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators, SEEA, G20 Data Gaps Initiative or the OECD International Programme for Action of Climate. The Task Force may describe identified data gaps. The Task Force will also aim to showcase how the CES Set of Core Statistics and Indicators could be used in the above areas and take into account the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators.

11. In carrying out its activities, the Task Force will cooperate with the UN agencies and other international organizations working in this area. The work should be aligned and coordinated with corresponding efforts under UNFCCC, outcomes of COP26 and with the findings of the Eurostat review of climate change-related statistics.

## **V. Methods of work**

12. The Task Force will work primarily via e-mail, collaborative workspace and online conferences. Physical meetings of the Task Force could be organized back-to-back to other meetings attended by a significant number of Task Force members.

## **VI. Membership**

13. The Task Force will include representatives of national statistical offices, other involved national agencies, academia and international organizations.

14. The following countries, international organizations and research institutes have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Azerbaijan, Canada, Italy, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, ECLAC, EEA, ESCAP, Eurostat, International Energy Agency, United Nations Statistics Division, UNFCCC and Midsummer Analytics. The Task Force is open to other countries and organisations that would like to contribute to its work.

15. UNECE will act as Secretariat to the Task Force.

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